

Lowrey addendum to 22-9-1-92 and 22-10-1-92:

Warren, this is directed to Warren Nishimoto and it's in regard to the Fred P. Lowrey oral history interview. This dictation fills in the gap which you asked me to look over beginning at the top of page 15.

I had said on page 14, "He was a very strict person, but with a strictness, he always had a twinkle in his eye and he always, you know. . . . He was a very interesting person and very interested in what we all were doing. I had great respect and admiration for him and even though it is now sixty to seventy years since these particular discussions took place, they are quite vivid in my mind."

One of my first and foremost impressions of him is how careful he was about money matters. He was very strict in the sense of making us realize the responsibility of money—what we did, how we used it, and so on.

For instance, he taught me my first lessons about the use of debt. He made the remark that all debts are always repaid. He meant by this that if the borrower does not repay the lender who loans the money, then the money is not repaid and the lender pays the bill to balance his account. In other words, the lender loses what he loaned. He pays the loan. And therefore, all loans are always repaid. This was one of my first lessons in money management and it has stuck with me ever since. And it is why when I was at college and started reading about Keynesian economics, I

was very reluctant to accept the Keynesian theory and really never have and feel that it is why we have gotten ourselves into so much trouble since the 1930s when Roosevelt started to use it.

My grandfather was full of stories of old Hawai`i and so we got many glimpses of this through him. He also had one of the early electric runabouts here. It was an open car, electric, and intriguing thing to me was that it didn't have a horn on it like most automobiles but had an electric bell on it. For some reason, this was always interesting to me.

Another very clear recollection I have is his telling about how they paid the bills in the early days. Paper money and banks weren't all that normal and that wasn't—while there was some, a lot of transactions handled that way, a lot more were handled by cash. And he at Lewers & Cooke felt he wanted most of the bills to be paid by cash and he described the way that they did it. They put either gold or silver coins in a wheelbarrow and went around from place to place and paid their bills that way. This was a very interesting memory of the days from 1890s or late 1880s when he started until banking and checking and so on became a lot more acceptable.

Many of his stories also were related to the Lewers & Cooke sailing vessels. Lewers & Cooke, being in the merchandise business and bringing in a significant part of the lumber, had to have transportation, and in its early years had no ships of its own so

had to charter or get space aboard a ship to bring its lumber in. But then sometime in the '60s or '70s, they bought a barkentine ship by the name of *Hope*, H-O-P-E. She, however, burned in 1889 and so she was lost, and Lewers & Cooke was in a problem. Fortunately, however, several of the partners of Lewers & Cooke had—and some, perhaps, nonpartners—had contracted with a company in Seattle to build first the *Robert Lewers* and a year or so later, the *Alice Cooke*. These were four-masted sailing ships with a fore and aft rig and were very adaptable to the Hawaiian trade. Running before the wind to Hawai`i but having to beat back the windward were more efficient than the square-rigger type vessels that more often had been used. The *Robert Lewers* was, I believe, delivered in 1889, and the *Alice Cooke* was delivered in 1891. They were pretty much sister ships with the exception of the rigging of the spanker mast—that's the last of the four masts. The *Robert Lewers* had a gaff rig, but the *Alice Cooke* was rigged with a fore and aft, but no gaff, but had then what was called a ringtail jib—a ringtail topsail, which gave her the full sail complement of the *Robert Lewers*, but she was easier to handle running before the wind, was easier to bring her about.

As the First World War began to come about, the American Hawaiian Steamship Company which supplied Hawai`i with a lot of its materials either had to or did withdraw some of its ships from Hawai`i, leaving Hawai`i with an inadequate shipping capacity. So, Lewers & Cooke, in 1913—by the way, the company at that time only had eighty employees, giving you some idea of the size of the company at that time—but the company bought a three-masted schooner by the name of

*Repeat*. She was called a baldheaded schooner in that she had no topsails. She sailed---she was much smaller than the other ships, the *Robert Lewers* and the *Alice Cooke*, but she was able to enter many of the smaller lumber ports on the Pacific Coast and did a great job for the company during the war. The *Repeat* was sold during the latter part of the World War, World War I, leaving the company with just the two four-masted sailing schooners, the *Robert Lewers* and the *Alice Cooke*.

I think I showed you paintings of the two that are on my wall here. I was fortunate in being able to pick these up from Champion Paper Company when they liquidated all their operations in Honolulu and have enjoyed them ever since. They have always been very meaningful to me because as a little kid I used to see these pictures on the wall. And one of the things we were always interested in and the family was always interested in was the movement and the arrival of these ships because it meant the arrival of new inventory for sale and talks with the captain and other crew members who we, in a way, got to know.

The ships were a great asset to the company during the years that they ran, but there were major problems. At one time one of the captains was swept overboard in a storm and lost at sea. And there were other accidents aboard the ships, which were, of course, problems. The *Robert Lewers* sailed from the time she was delivered in 1889 until approximately, let's see, approximately, I think, it was the early '20s, anyway, when she unfortunately tried to get into the Straits of Juan de Fuca and was not able to make headway against the storm, and the storm—while

the tug had been called and came out to try and pick her up, but the tug was never able to get a line aboard her and she ended up on the rocks on the southwestern coast of British Columbia, Vancouver island, and was a complete wreck. All the crew were saved, but the vessel was a complete loss. The *Alice Cooke* continued to sail until about the middle '20s when unfortunately she ran into a very severe storm off the Columbia River and the port of Astoria and was severely damaged to such an extent that the company had the ship towed to Astoria and at that time decided to sell the ship and she was never used to haul lumber again but was sold to an Alaskan ship cannery and used as a barge platform for a ship cannery in Alaska.

In the meantime, after the war, needing a greater lumber capacity, the company bought a used four-masted schooner, the *Commodore*, in about 1920 or '21, and the *Commodore* was quite a bit larger than either the *Robert Lewers* or the *Alice Cooke*, carrying approximately a million-and-a-half feet of lumber against the million feet that the other two had carried. And the *Commodore* operated successfully all during the '20s and into the early '30s, but beginning in the '30s with labor problems starting and problems of stevedore problems, labor problems on the Pacific Coast in the Pacific Coast ports, it got more and more difficult to be sure whether we could get lumber, number one, and if we got it aboard, when we would get it to Honolulu. About 1935 the company decided to give up the lumber—the last schooner, the *Commodore*, and she was sold to the Matson Navigation Company, and the company then used Matson to bring in all of their lumber from the Pacific Coast with the following exception. There were ports from northern

California through Oregon and Washington that were where the bar and the channel going into the lumber loading docks were so shallow that the Matson lumber ships could not get in. So, arrangements were made with barge companies to go in, pick up the lumber, and then a tug would pick up the barge and bring the barge to Honolulu. This was done to some extent but was never a great part of the lumber trade coming into the Islands. As far as Lewers & Cooke was concerned, later on, other companies used barges to a greater extent.

Finishing up with the schooners, on a more personal note, my father tells the story that one of his early boyhood recollections was a party given aboard the schooner *Alice Cooke* in 1891 after her arrival in Honolulu on her maiden voyage. The party was given by Mr. and Mrs. Clarence M. Cooke for their daughter Alice for whom the ship was named. Alice Cooke later married Philip E. Spalding, Jr., who was at one time a vice president of Lewers & Cooke before leaving Lewers & Cooke and moving over to C. Brewer & Co., where I think he stayed until his death many years later.

Two other personal recollections, which may be of interest. Believe it or not, my brother John and I saw our first snow and ice aboard the *Commodore*. This may be hard for you to believe, but what happened was that the lumber would be cut and stored in the Pacific Northwest. And in the wintertime with the weather well below freezing point, the lumber got extremely cold. And then it was loaded aboard the schooner in this very cold condition, way below freezing point. Then it might snow

during the operation. So that when the ship arrived here and they took off the deck cargo, why, that had probably thawed out during the thirty days or so at sea coming down. That was about the average time it took. Some trips were as slow as twenty-three or -four days, and some might last as long as thirty-five to thirty-six days. Anyway, the deck cargo would thaw out, but when they broke into the hatches and started to unload the cargo below deck, why, there was some snow and some ice. And so, here were two little Hawaiian kids, my brother and I, we'd go down there to see the ship and visit and see how the unloading was coming along. And below docks, here was snow and ice. So this was our first experience of seeing that at least on the ground. We might have seen it at a distance on Mauna Kea or Mauna Loa, and so on.

Just one other piece of information, if you want to put it in. In the summer that my father or the time that my father told me that he could no longer cover any further costs on my college, I guess was after my first year, I looked around to see what I could do about earning my way through. And it seemed to me that it was going to be pretty difficult job to do, and I thought, well, the better thing to do at that time was to come back to Honolulu and try and get some sort of a job here. So, we drove across the continent, which only cost us twenty dollars the way we did it—dividing up the cost amongst four guys—and then I was able to get transportation to Seattle on a freighter and that cost me, as I remember it, twelve dollars.

And then I went down to Tacoma where the *Commodore* was loading and had

already made arrangements for me to come down as a working hand, ship's boy or something, anyway, to be of some help. And so I helped out during the loading process around Tacoma. Also spent quite a bit of time in the mill that was cutting the lumber for the vessel so that I learned something about logging and lumber operations of milling and so on, and the loading of the vessels and so on. And then I came down aboard the *Commodore*. We finished loading late on a Friday, as I remember it. And on a Saturday, we called for the tug to pick us up in the morning. And we had to test the compasses and so on, so the tug moved us around various places as we tested the compass to make sure that they were all right. And then the tug hauled us from there up Puget Sound past Seattle and then out the Straits of Juan de Fuca. And very late that Saturday afternoon, probably four or five o'clock, the tug cut us loose about thirty miles off [ *Tatouch* ] Light, which was the marking point for the south shore of the straits, Straits of Juan de Fuca.

So we were under sail at that point and started out, hopefully, to Honolulu. But that night was a dead calm and (chuckles) the dead calm continued for one full week. And the following Saturday night, we could still see [ *Tatouch* ] Light, which meant that we had moved in and out with the tides for seven days and made no progress whatsoever toward Honolulu. Fortunately, however, the winds came up that night and we were off to Honolulu and had a pretty good trip until we got off the north coast of Moloka`i, north of Kalaupapa, at which point we ran into another case of no wind. Of course, Lewers & Cooke in Honolulu knew the ship was there and they (chuckles) at this point needed the lumber bad enough so that they sent a tug out



to pick us up. And it was very enjoyable moment to have the *Mikioi* or whichever one of the other tugs it was come alongside and have Jack Young, who was skipper of the tug, wave to us and get their line aboard and tow us from Kalaupapa into Honolulu.

I don't seem to have any recollection as to just how long that took, but it was a fascinating trip to be aboard one of these schooners and see how they operated. They had no power whatsoever aboard except a winch, steam winch, which could be used haul sails up and down and that sort of thing if necessary. We had no cold storage. The iceboxes were filled with meat and so on, but they were such that they only lasted for about three days. And then, all of our fresh meat was gone and we lived on salt pork and salt meat, beans, and other cereals and so on for the trip. It's really interesting what you can do with some of those products and make very worthwhile and enjoyable meals out of them. I learned to like beans and have always liked them since as a result of that trip. But it was a real experience to see how lumber was brought down in the old days. And of course, at that time, we still were using the *Commodore*, but it was only a few years later that the labor problems and other considerations made it worthwhile to sell her. Another very important consideration in selling the *Commodore* was that she brought in a million and a half feet, which was a significant part of our year's sales. And if she made four trips a year, which was the best that she ever did, why, our lumber came in in four chunks during the year, which made handling inventory extremely difficult and it meant we would run out of certain things and also it was harder and harder at

that time to find mills in the Northwest who could take the *Commodore* and fill her from their docks. So that when you added the inventory problems, the unknown delivery problems, and the labor problems, and so on, it made it probably very wise that the company sold the *Commodore* within a year or two after that trip that I was fortunate to have go on her.

I think this probably way more than covers what you want on this part about the schooners. And, Warren, I'll just leave it up to you as to how much you want to edit out of this. I just thought, while I was filling in the space that was vacant there and I have no recollection as to exactly how much I gave you before of this, seeing it's almost six weeks since I dictated the first part. I'll leave it up to you to edit it and take out what you want and leave in what you think might be important as far as what you want this oral history to produce. So, this winds up the part about the vacancy that you referred to on page 12. I'll call this part of it off here.

Warren, I've gone into a lot of detail here that probably is not really obviously necessary to the project the way you want it, so take whatever liberties you want with editing this down to a length that is appropriate to give the picture and background that you want for this particular study. I'll leave it entirely up to you.